

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 71
By Shepard

A RESOLUTION to recognize John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and to commend his selection of service as the VFW's theme during his tenure in office.

WHEREAS, the members of this legislative body are pleased to specially recognize the important role in the life of our nation played by veterans' organizations and the major contributions made by the leaders of those organizations in carrying out their missions; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has long been at the forefront of activities on behalf of veterans and in a wide range of beneficial service projects; since August 20, 2004, John Furgess of Tennessee has led the VFW as its Commander-in Chief, only the second Tennessean to hold that post; and

WHEREAS, elected during the VFW's 105th national convention, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, Commander-in-Chief Furgess has chosen as the centerpiece of his tenure the theme *Celebration of Service*; and

WHEREAS, John Furgess was born at Langley Field, Virginia in 1943 while his father, a twelve-year Army veteran, was stationed there as a member of the Army Air Forces; the family moved to Nashville when John was two, and the city has remained his home, except during his military service; and

WHEREAS, following his elementary and secondary education, John Furgess earned a bachelor's degree in business from Middle Tennessee State University in 1965; a participant in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), he was commissioned in August of 1965 and served in the Army Security Agency as an operations officer in the Radio Research Unit, Division Support Company of the Americal Division in Chu Lai, Vietnam from October 1967-October 1968; and

WHEREAS, the Americal Division was formed on the battlefield in Vietnam during 1967 as a part of I Corps and went on to sustain the third largest number of casualties of the Army's seven full divisions deployed in Vietnam; for his service, then Captain Furgess was awarded the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, and the Vietnam Service Medal; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of his regular U.S. Army service in 1970, John Furgess joined the Tennessee National Guard, serving in the Intelligence Section of the 30th Armored Division and spending 20 years with the 194th Engineer Brigade, before retiring with the rank of Colonel in 1993; also in 1970, he joined VFW Post 1970 in Nashville, becoming a life member in 1974, and serving at various times as Post Commander, District Commander, Department (State) Commander, a member of the VFW National Council of Administration, and on numerous national committees; and

WHEREAS, in civilian life, John Furgess was employed as a life insurance salesman for Mutual of New York in Nashville and during the early eighties was a columnist and assistant editor for *The Westview*, a weekly newspaper; in 1981 he was hired to work with the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program field office in Nashville, where, with fellow veteran Fred Tucker, he initiated a number of projects, including erecting the Tennessee Vietnam Veterans Memorial, launching Jobs for Vietnam Vets, and the MTSU annual salute to veterans on campus; and

WHEREAS, from 1983 to October 2002, John Furgess served as Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, in which position he supervised 11 field offices and hired dedicated employees as claims and field representatives to assist Tennessee's half million veterans; and

WHEREAS, as VFW Commander-in-Chief, John Furgess seeks to foster a celebration of veterans' service and to set as priorities VA health care, especially for the severely wounded; the Adopt-a-Unit program, which includes National Guard Armories and Reserve Centers; member involvement with the National Home for Children through a donor program; the recruitment of new members, especially younger veterans from those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan; and expanding membership eligibility; and

WHEREAS, John Furgess continually urges VFW members to consider their own motivations for joining the VFW, find others similarly motivated, and seek new recruits who might identify with such reasoning, to make the organization thrive; the Adopt-a-Unit Program, the Military Assistance Program, the Military Initiative Program, along with scheduling convenient meetings, are all valuable tools for recruitment; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his busy life in the military and the VFW, John Furgess is most appreciative of the love and support of his wife, Alma, who he married in 1971; his daughters Amy Brown, Mary Catherine Conrad, and Melissa Springs, and his 11 grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the unquestioned bravery and valorous military service, the profound dedication to the welfare of his fellow veterans and their families, and the selfless commitment to the common good of VFW Commander-in-Chief John Furgess are indeed worthy of special recognition; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we congratulate John Furgess for his impressive efforts to revitalize the mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and thank him for his life of service to his country, his fellow veterans and their needs, and his unwavering support of those ideals and institutions that we all hold dear. We also offer him our best wishes for every success during his tenure as Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, and much happiness and satisfaction in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.